

# DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

JAMES,

A MEMBER OF THE OLD,

AND

JACOB,

A MEMBER OF THE NEW

Connexion of Methodists.

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BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEIT.—*Rom. xii. 16.*  
PROVE ALL THINGS;—HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.  
*1 Thess. v. 21.*

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# A Dialogue, &c.

**JAMES.**—  
 I hear that you have left the Methodist Connection—  
 Of all men, I never thought that you would have  
 turned out of the good old way.

**JACOB.**—  
 I do not know what I have left the Methodist Con-  
 nection, for I am connected with some of the most pious  
 and useful Ministers of the Gospel, and we meet in state  
 and grand as usual, and we attend and love each other  
 and I hope that I shall never turn out of this way.

**JAMES.**—  
 But I mean that you have renounced all connection  
 with the Connection.

**JACOB.**—  
 That needs an explanation: I am connected with the  
 Conference that meet at the Great Chapel, near St Peter's,  
 I believe have been the same Conference of the Me-  
 thodists.

**JAMES.**—  
 You have always took you for a man of  
 good will. Do not you know that the Conference at  
 St Peter's was held at the Great Chapel, near St Peter's?

**JACOB.**—  
 I am of the Methodist opinion, in his life of M.  
 Wesley. He is said to tell for what reason the  
 Conference calls itself the Conference of the Methodist

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## A Dialogue, &c.

JAMES.

I Hear that you have left the Methodist Connection.—  
Of all men, I never thought that you would have  
turned out of the good old way.

JACOB.

I do not know that I have left the Methodist Connection, for I am connected with some of the most pious and sensible Members of the Society :—We meet in class and band as usual ; and we attend the Love-Feast and Society Meeting, on Sunday, as regularly as ever we did. And I hope that I shall never turn out of this way.

JAMES.

But I mean that you have renounced all connection with the Conference.

JACOB.

That needs an explanation. I am connected with the Conference that met at Ebenezer Chapel, in Leeds ; and I believe it to have been the *true* Conference of the Methodists.

JAMES.

You surprize me !—I always took you for a man of good sense.—Do not you know that the Conference of *Preachers* was held at the Great Chapel, near St Peter's-Square ?

JACOB.

I am of Dr Whitehead's opinion, in his Life of Mr. Wesley.—He says, It is hard to tell for what reason the Conference calls itself the Conference of the Methodists,



seeing that the Preachers admit none of the People to be present, unless it be a good hint that the people should insist upon their right of assisting in the Conference. But I am informed that travelling Preachers and Delegates from the People met together in Ebenezer-Chapel, and conferred about the affairs of the Societies. Therefore, I call it the *true* Conference.

JAMES.

I have great objections against Delegates, and do not wish them to be admitted into Conference.

JACOB.

What are your objections? As for my part, I think that they might give the Preachers much useful information, and help to support their authority among the People.

JAMES.

I will mention one great objection that I have against their admission into Conference, they would destroy the itinerant Plan, by interfering with the stationing of the Preachers. For one Delegate would say, you must let us have Mr \_\_\_\_\_ the next year; another Delegate would positively insist upon the removal of Mr \_\_\_\_\_ from their circuit; and the Committee appointed to draw up the plan of stations would not know what to do to please all sides.

JACOB.

And do you think that nothing of this kind is done at present?—I am well assured, that men who have not the name of *Delegates*, do all this business now; in many circuits, the Stewards, Leaders, and even private Members write to some of the Preachers who are appointed at the District Meetings, to draw up the Plan of Stations at the Conference, and inform them what Preachers should be sent, and what Preachers must be removed; and it is frequently done as they desire. I believe I could give you some curious information on this subject. The follow-  
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ing circumstance will be sufficient :—Two Preachers had a desire to stay a second year in the circuit, and a letter was written to Mr Wesley, requesting him to station them again ; and as one of them was a great favourite with Mr Wesley, the request was granted. The Preachers then informed the congregation that Mr Wesley had granted *their* request, and both the Preachers were to stop another year. This declaration produced an enquiry among the people, in order to find out the persons who had sent the letter ; and, at last, it turned out that only *one* man had done the whole business. I hope, my friend, you now see that Delegates without the *name*, have been in the habits of doing the business of Conference for many years. And all that I want is, that they may be properly chosen by the People, and responsible to them for their conduct.

JAMES.

But I have another objection against Delegates.—If they should be admitted into Conference, and could not carry things forward according to their mind, they would return home discontent, and prejudice the People against the Preachers.

JACOB.

I do not see how this could be the case, unless we suppose that the Preachers and People have *separate* interests to support. For if the Preachers be determined only to promote the eternal salvation of the People, and the People be resolved to allow the Preachers a comfortable maintenance, I think they should have but *one* interest in view, and both ought to unite, by every possible means, to promote it.

JAMES.

Do you suppose that those men who want to lay open the accounts of the Book-Room have one interest with the Preachers ?

JACOB.

JACOB.

What makes you think that they have not ?

JAMES.

I am told that the Book-Room is much embarrassed, and rather behind hand, as we say.

JACOB.

Surely that is a good reason why the accounts of it should be laid open, in order that the People may be induced to come forward and help to increase the sale of books.

JAMES.

Some of the Preachers have also said to me, that the Book-Room is a great help to *afflicted* and *distressed* families, and that it would not be well to publish the accounts of it.

JACOB.

I can easily inform you how the families of the Preachers are supplied. At the yearly District Meetings, every Preacher is asked, Have you received your quarterage ? Has your wife ? Have your children ?—If any have not received the proper quarterage, the deficiency is taken down in the Minutes of the Meeting, and brought into the Conference by the Chairman of the District. About the end of the Conference, every Chairman reads over the accounts of his district, and all the deficiencies of the Preachers are paid out of the yearly collection. But as the yearly collection generally falls short of the sum necessary to pay all demands, the Conference is obliged to draw the rest of the money out of the Book-Room. Now this account is published in the minutes every year, for you are told how much the yearly collection is, and how much is paid away, consequently all above the sum of the yearly collection has been taken from the Book-Room.

JAMES.

Well, cannot this account satisfy you ? What more would you have ?

JACOB.

I will tell you. Mess. Mather and Pawson published an account of the Book-Room last year, and among the disbursements they mentioned a very large sum for house-rent, &c. &c. but nobody that I have met with, could either understand or explain that account, therefore it stands for nothing. I would have a clear account published, that every tradesman could understand; and I would have the Conference to say, whether any money be paid out of the Book-Room to Preachers who apply in *private*. For until a proper regulation takes place here, the Book-Room will give the Seniors, I mean a *few* of them, a *secret*, but powerful influence, in all important matters of the Connection.

JAMES.

Do you believe that any Preacher would apply in *private*.

JACOB.

Perhaps some might think it the most *genteel* way.

JAMES.

But still I fear the Delegates would do hurt, for many of them do not love the Plan of Pacification; and you know that one of our able Preachers has declared that the good old ship of our Connexion was run into that place of safety, to preserve her timbers from shipwreck.

JACOB.

I doubt the Place of Safety, as you call it, is the Place of danger. For, first, It is a mere political agreement with some trustees, stewards, and leaders, about a venerable and sacred ordinance, of the gospel of Christ; in which it is stipulated, that if they please, the societies shall be at liberty to obey the dying command of Jesus Christ, according to their own conscience. But if these men do not think proper to grant liberty, the people must do as well as they *can* with their consciences. —

Secondly,



Secondly, I fear there is duplicity in it, for the trustees, stewards, and leaders are to certify, that the administration of the Lord's supper will cause no *separation* in their society. When this article was debated at the Manchester conference, some of the preachers objected to it, and said that if only two or three warm members should oppose the introduction of the Lord's supper, and declare that they would leave the society in case it should be administered there, that this would be a separation; and consequently, two or three men would be able to prevent four or five hundred of their brethren from enjoying their liberty of conscience as Englishmen, and performing a solemn act of worship to God as Christians. To this Mr. Thompson replied, "That by a separation was meant, a number of the society going off, or leaving it, with a *preacher* at their head." And unless a preacher went off at their head, fifty or an hundred might leave the society, and yet it would be no separation. As the preachers who pleaded for the liberty of the people, believed this explanation to be the sense of Mr. Thompson's party in the conference, they accepted it, and desired that it might be printed in the Plan of Pacification. The request was reasonable, and agreeable to that *sincerity* which ought to appear in all mutual engagements; but it was denied. And the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the church party have never had any official information given by the conference of the real meaning of the word separation. Therefore, the Plan of Pacification may be broken twenty times in the sense of the *church* brethren, but not once in the judgment of *conference*.

#### JAMES.

Have they had no official information on the meaning of the word separation? Did not Mess. Mather and Pawson inform the trustees at Bristol last year, that the explanation which you say was given by Mr. Thompson, was not the sense of conference? I can shew you a printed letter sent by them to the preachers, in which they deny it.

JACOB.

I think I have seen it, but I do not believe it, for the following reason: When one party in the conference would not consent to make the private meaning of the word separation public, another party, to the number of fifty-seven preachers, drew up a Protest against the concealment of the explanation. Now, as many respectable characters drew up this Protest, you must allow that they had *some* reason for doing it, and you may depend upon it, that the reason which I have given is the *true* one.

JAMES.

You speak of the Protest, and the respectable preachers who signed it, as confidently as if you had seen it.

JACOB.

I did once see, and read it over, and I know many of the preachers whose names were at it, for I have been nearly thirty years in society.

JAMES.

But the Pacific Plan will keep the *majority* on our side.

JACOB.

I do not know that; for an active minority may soon become a great majority. And as the Pacific plan affords no relief to the consciences of a minority of any society, it may be the accidental cause of free enquiry, and vigorous efforts, to obtain the full liberty of the gospel, in the enjoyment of all its ordinances.

JAMES.

From what you have said of this Plan, it appears, that you do not believe that we can expect a  *blessing*  upon it. —

But let me ask you, can you expect a blessing on Delegates, who want to meddle with the preachers' fund, and make the allowance less? Should we not shew our love

to those who have spent their strength in the work of the Lord, by providing a comfortable support for them in old age, and for their widows and children after their death?

JACOB.

I believe it is our duty. And all the Delegates of piety and good sense, will support the fund with their interest. But in order that you may see the subject of allowance from the fund in a clear, rational, and scriptural point of view, let me lay down the following account of the state of things among the preachers: Several of them are men of property; acquired by marriage, or family connexions, or trade, before they travelled. Some of them are worth thirty, forty, fifty, and sixty pounds a year of their own; now, let me ask you, whether you think that these men should have as much from the fund, as those preachers who have not five shillings a year of their own?

JAMES.

The men of property subscribe to the fund.

JACOB.

I allow it. But what do they subscribe? The money that they *receive*, for labouring in the work; they subscribe none of their own to it.

JAMES.

Some of them take nothing for their wives from the circuits.

JACOB.

True. And others of them take as much as the poorest preacher in the connexion. I will assure you this was not the way in the primitive church of Christ; for if any clergyman had property of his own to support him, he was looked on as a robber, if he took any thing from the church. This you may find in the Apostolical Constitutions; an ancient book it is.

JAMES.



JAMES.

But if the allowance from the fund, was not fixed according to the number of years that a preacher has travelled, it would be discretionary, and perhaps a family might suffer for want of a sufficient allowance.

JACOB.

Do you know that the preachers have added a second plan to the first rules of the fund, which they call the Plan of Mercy? By this plan, if a preacher have travelled but a few years, and consequently has but a small allowance, by the *rules* of the fund, the Plan of *Mercy* gives him a discretionary support.

JAMES.

What more would you have done about the rules of the fund? Can any thing be *better* contrived?

JACOB:

Certainly there may. I would have the Plan of Mercy, or necessity, or rather charity, if you please, that is love, to stand, and the *rules* that allow so much to a man, according to the years that he has travelled, whether he wants it or not, entirely set aside. Then the friends would heartily subscribe towards the fund, and endeavour to make the aged preachers, and their widows, and children comfortable.

JAMES.

My dear friend, you are the same candid man that I always took you to be; and you have given me much information on the subjects of *Stationing the Preachers—the State of the Book-room—the Plan of Pacification—and the Preachers' fund*, I must confess that I feel the force of many observations that you have made upon the Old Plan, and believe that some *reform* is necessary. But many are ready to think, that by giving the people so much power, by admitting Delegates into your conference, your plan will lead to republican principles.

JACOB.

JACOB.

My dear friend, you remember the men who said to Pilate, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend*, John xix. 12. and there have been *designing* men in all ages of the church of Christ, who, when they could not answer the arguments of the intelligent part of reformers of abuses, nor stop the endeavours of the worthy and zealous among them, have followed the example of the Jews, and done all that they could to blacken the brightest characters, and misrepresent the best designs. I will only add for your satisfaction, that our form of *church* government is nearly modelled upon the form of *civil* government in England.

JAMES.

I shall be glad to find that true.

JACOB.

Well, let us begin with the King, who is at the head of civil government; and our Head of spiritual government, is Christ the Anointed.\* Secondly, There is the aristocracy in the nobles; and our church officers form the religious aristocracy. Lastly, There are the commons, which make the democratic part of government; and the body of our professors makes the church democracy among us.

JAMES.

You have almost persuaded me to join the new itinerancy, my prejudices are now well nigh removed, and I am glad that we met this day, and have had such free conversation on different subjects. But do you believe that ever the Old Connexion and the New will unite again?

JACOB.

I cannot tell, I dare say the friends of liberty will gladly come forward, to promote an union upon gospel principles at *any* time.

JAMES.

I rejoice to hear you say so; and I believe that I shall unite with the New Connexion, after my return from the South.